

PREPARED BY CLAIRE CHRISTIAN & DANA HOLDEN

LA BOITE & CIRCA PRESENT

WHEN ONE

DOOR CLOSES

EDUCATION NOTES



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# FEATURE TEACHER



## DANA HOLDEN

Dana is a Drama Teacher and Year 12 Coordinator at Kedron State High School, President of Drama Queensland, a Drama Panellist, a Teach Team Ambassador for the Department of Education and Training and a massive nerd for all things drama education.

She developed her passion for the arts growing up in Cairns. Dana enjoys actively engaging in the arts community and working with fellow educators to expand what we at Kedron call the “Drama Family”.

### WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PLAY AND WHY?

There was a one woman show called ‘Random’ performed during the WTF festival a number of years ago that was incredibly cathartic for me. I had just returned from London and this incredible British woman portrayed an entire family in a performance so real and raw that I was brought to tears, and that I wasn’t the only one who felt that way. Particularly after trying for a year to find hope when it seemed my students didn’t have any for themselves. Just amazing.

### WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER?

I have a fondness for “moments”. I talk about them as a year coordinator to my cohort a lot. I love those moments when a student does something nice for another student or person (or you!) without being asked. I love those moments when they accomplish something they didn’t know they could. When they discover what they want to do, who they want to be and how they want to be in the world. Drama is such a special subject in allowing students to explore the world and their place in it. We teach how to think, which is pretty cool. I love those moments they come back and visit or send you an email telling you that you made a difference.

### YOUR GO-TO WARM UP GAME?

This really depends on the class. Different classes have different vibes and different things work. For one of my classes it is Hit Man and for another it is a dance party for the last 5 minutes of Period 4 on a Friday. I can’t think of a better way to finish the week!

### WHAT'S SOMETHING YOU WISH THAT ALL OF YOUR STUDENTS KNEW?

That being them will always be enough. And believe it.

# ABOUT LA BOITE

## ARTISTIC VISION

### “Theatre That Matters”

La Boite holds a unique place in the hearts and minds of artists and audiences in Brisbane. For the past nine decades La Boite has represented the adventurous and alternative. There has always been a strong focus on the development of new work and artists, and today it is no different.

The stories, ideas and voices of our city and country are many and varied and as such La Boite seeks to represent and engage in this beautiful and rich diversity; the diversity of form, of ideas, ethnicity, gender – of identity.

## HISTORY

La Boite is a story of people, passion, purpose and place.

People like Barbara Sisley, who in 1916 found herself stranded in Brisbane when her theatrical touring company unexpectedly disbanded. She along with literature academic J. J. Stable formed the Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society in 1925 in response to the public's growing appetite for high quality, locally-produced theatre. For twenty years, Sisley and Stable reigned supreme in Brisbane's theatrical community.

After decades of moving between large venues such as the Theatre Royal and Albert Hall, in 1967 the company finally found a home of its own. Company members converted an old Queenslander in Hale St, Milton into a theatre-in-the-round. Hollowed out, the house had the appearance of a box and the name 'La Boite' was born. In 1972, the company moved next door to the Blair Wilson designed theatre, which so many remember with such fondness. This remained home for three decades, before the move to our current Roundhouse Theatre in Kelvin Grove in 2003.

90 years of existence takes resilience and ingenuity. La Boite has survived two World Wars, censorship, public outrage, politically-charged programming, changing tastes, floods and the constant flirting with failure that comes with walking the tightrope between risk and certainty.

Ultimately, La Boite's history is your history. Whether you have been with us for years or are new to the fold, we welcome you to join us as we move into our next 90 years.

## THE ROUNDHOUSE THEATRE

La Boite's Roundhouse Theatre is an epic-intimate space and Australia's only purpose-built theatre-in-the-round. It's also flexible enough to be used as a thrust stage with the audience on three sides. This 400-seat home stage offers a distinctive theatre experience.

# ABOUT CIRCA

From Brisbane, Australia comes a bold new vision of contemporary circus. A place where acrobatics and movement meld into a seamless whole. A celebration of the expressive possibilities of the human body pushed to its extremes. Since 2006 Circa has toured to 34 countries across six continents. Circa's work has been rapturously received by audiences, presenters and critics around the world. Critics have raved about Circa calling the work “stunning...exquisite... heart stopping” and “electrically charged”.

Circa's current touring shows span diverse contexts from works for families in traditional arts centres to European contemporary arts festivals. Its works are highly innovative genre-bending pieces that stretch the practice and perceptions of circus. Circa features a full time ensemble, a concentrated administrative team and a dedicated circus studio.

Circa also runs a Training Centre with an impressive workshop program in Brisbane at our professional studio, in schools and with partners throughout Queensland and beyond. On top of our term based and one-off training activities, Circa has an impressive track record of producing quality workshops for children, young people and adults in a range of community contexts.



# ABOUT THE SHOW

## SYNOPSIS

A door slams. A shot is fired. On the other side, unseen by the audience or by the befuddled, inconsequential husband and lovers are the three great heroines who created twentieth century drama: Miss Julie, Hedda Gabler and Nora.

What if they all landed up in the same room?

What if they couldn't speak?

What if the room was full of scratched recordings of A Dolls House, Hedda Gabbler and Miss Julie, plus a dash of Freud?

How would they navigate each other, their own pasts and the future?

La Boite and Circa join forces on this new creation. Three masterpieces of turn-of-the-century drama meet the visceral force of extreme acrobatic theatre.

## PRODUCTION DETAILS

### CAST & CREATIVES

Directors **Yaron Lifschitz & Libby McDonnell**

Dramaturg **Todd MacDonald**

Lighting Designer **Jason Organ**

Costume Designer **Libby McDonnell**

Performers **Circa Ensemble**

Composer **Oonagh Sherrard**



## THINGS TO PONDER

- The show used three plays, Hedda Gabler, A Doll's House and Miss Julie, which were all written in the 1800's, and the work of Freud, whose work was most prevalent in the early 1900's, as their stimulus. Discuss how this time period, particularly women in this time period, may be relevant to contemporary audiences.
- The three plays all deal with themes and issues including:
  - Issues of gender and sex
  - Feminism
  - Mental health
  - Darwinism
  - FreudYou might also like to discuss in direct relation to the form and style of circus:
  - Trust/Rapport
  - Risk and Danger
- This is the first time that these seven acrobats have worked together as an ensemble. The first week of rehearsal was spent building a shared language of how they would work together throughout the process and for the show.
- During the rehearsal process, the acrobats playing Nora and Hedda had to explore the moment that they met, knowing that Nora had just left and Hedda was dead ... but she obviously isn't. The acrobats were asked "What do they do?" The ensemble were tasked with creating these 'moments' and then piecing them together to create the performance.
- The acrobats have a deep understanding and appreciation of one another's bodies - it is their instrument - and in order to be able to improvise in a way required by Circa's show they have to know the way one another's bodies and brains are hardwired. You could discuss the body as an actors instrument when going to see the performance.
- In rehearsal the ensemble pondered what these women, Hedda, Nora and Miss Julie would be like if they were acrobats. They played with how they thought they might move if they were acrobats. They also considered what their relationship would be to each other if they met. As well as, their relationship to men.  
Ask your students to look out for the relationships between the women and the relationships the women have with the men. How does acrobatics add to the nature of the work and these well-known stories?

# ARTIST CHECK IN

## AN INTERVIEW

With *When One Door Closes* Directors **Yaron Lifschitz & Libby McDonnell** from CIRCA

**1. We'd love to know a bit more about your process and how you go from concept to show. Could you give us a brief run-down of how you have worked on WODC?**

Our process is to build acrobatically while conceptually interrogating the subject matter leaving plenty of room for joy, discovery and play. Material is constantly being iterated, shifted into different scenes and pushed beyond its natural limits.

**2. Your process is very collaborative, improvisational and includes lots of on-the-floor work. Can you describe a bit about your process, and suggest any avenues for teachers and students to explore in the classroom?**

Circa's languages are built on a methodology that can't readily be described in this context. All improvisations are based on a form, an exercise called Physical Jazz, which is a form of walking across a room and letting ideas build across a group.

Perhaps teachers might like to explore ideas of freedom and restriction physically - both of the self and from others.

**3. How much does music and or the sound design of the show inform the work that you do on the floor or does the work on the floor impact the sound design?**

It's a circle! Music informs the work and the work informs the music.

When you work with a living composer like Oonagh, their creativity adds another loop to the conversation.

As we don't use words, music carries much of the emotional force of the work and helps construct dramaturges.

**4. CIRCA's perspective on the best way to describe circus as a form/style and in your opinion, what makes it different to other physical forms like specific styles of physical theatre and dance?**

Circus is a form where people do extraordinarily difficult things – it's basically anything that mortals can't do!

There are many different forms and styles and number of these are borrowed for use in dance, physical theatre, variety and burlesque. It is not a pure form, there is no central authority on what makes circus circus.

At Circa we see ourselves as one link in a long and diverse chain of Australian Circus and Physical Theatre. Like any eco system our health is in our diversity.

The other thing with circus, apart from being difficult, is it should not bore the audience.

**5. WODC has been inspired by three pretty epic women – what do you see as the role of the male performers in WODC, are they taking on character traits from the three plays as well – or is their role something else?**

The show is constructed through the prism of the female experience in the plays. Rather than situate the woman in the male gaze they are complex multivalent constructions.

The men play roles as needed. Sometimes as antagonists, sometime memories, and at one point they all become Hedda Gabbler.

This is a theatrical analogue to Luce Irigaray's *Écriture Féminie*.

# ELEMENTS OF DRAMA DISCUSSION POINTS

## CHARACTER

- Three characters of Nora, Miss Julie and Hedda were the basis of this live performance. Choose a specific moment of dramatic action that exemplifies one of the characters. How? Why? What dramatic meaning did this communicate to the audience?

## RELATIONSHIPS AND MOVEMENT

- Consider how relationships in the play are communicated through body language and movement. Consider how you can show a relationship without "explaining" it.

## TENSION

- Because of the thrilling nature of Circus there is often a tension created between the performers and the audience, discuss this tension and how it might relate to focus.

## PLACE & SPACE

- Think about the Roundhouse theatre itself, and how the work being in the round impacts the dramatic meaning.
- Discuss proximity to the space, to each other and to the audience and how this impacts meaning as well as how the narrative was able to be told through spatial relationships.

## MOOD

- Discuss the impact of the sound design and music used to create specific moods. Use specific moments of dramatic action from the show and discuss how they made the audience feel. Also, consider how they would've been different if different artistic choices were made, such as alternative lighting or sound.

# CLASSROOM ANTICS

THE THREE PLAYS – A BREAKDOWN			
CHARACTER	HEDDA	MISS JULIE	NORA
<b>Play</b>	<i>Hedda Gabler</i>	<i>Miss Julie</i>	<i>A Doll's House</i>
<b>Written by</b>	Henrik Ibsen in 1890	August Strindberg 1888	Henrik Ibsen in 1879
<b>Style</b>	Realism	Naturalistic	Realism
<b>Start of the play</b>	Aunt Julie and Berte talking about the return of the newly married couple, Hedda and George. Conversations about how much money has been spent on the honeymoon and house for the aristocratic Hedda. It is inferred that Hedda is pregnant.	Midsummer's Eve before a dance. Miss Julie has recently had a broken engagement and the servants are gossiping about her before she enters and asks Jean to dance with her.	On Christmas Eve. Arrives home with presents for which her husband, Torvald, scolds her for spending too much money on. She is then blackmailed by an employee of her husband.
<b>Relationship with husband</b>	Strained. She has never loved him.	Miss Julie is unmarried but has a relationship with Jean, a senior servant at her father's manor. They consummate their relationship but he is already engaged to another woman.	Unhealthy. They have been married for 8 years and she feels that he treats her like a doll to be looked at.
<b>Major themes</b>	Marriage Desire Mental health Feminism  All women feel some form of pressure to conform to societal norms and expectations of women at the time. Each breaking them in their own way.	Class and gender conflict Degenerate women Hypnotism	Parental and filial obligations and responsibilities Freedom and sense of self Social appearances
<b>End of play</b>	Shoots herself.	Leaves the room with a razor to kill herself.	Walks out the door to leave her entire family.



## EACH PLAY:

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### HEDDA GABLER

<b>Available media resources:</b>	There is a movie version starring Ingrid Bergman (1962), as well as clips of the STC production starring Cate Blanchett available online.
<b>Overview of the play</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Written in 1890 by Henrik Ibsen.</li><li>• Realism, nineteenth century theatre</li><li>• The play was originally written in Ibsen's native tongue Norwegian.</li><li>• Hedda is married to George Tesman. She never loved George, but married him fearing that she has lost her youthfulness. However, due to financial hardship Hedda is told by George that she cannot count on the life of luxury that she was hoping for.</li><li>• Eilert Lovborg is a past lover of Hedda's and an academic rival to George. He is now in a relationship with Thea, a younger schoolmate of Hedda's. After George steals Eilert's written "masterpiece" which he thinks he lost at a party while drunk, he is handed a pistol by Hedda and told to kill himself, which he does. Hedda burns the manuscript which she claims is to secure the future for her and George.</li><li>• Brack, a judge, knows the truth of Eilert's death and so holds power over Hedda. She goes into another room and shoots herself. The others think she is simply firing shots and follow the noise, finding her dead. The play finishes with George, Brack and Thea finding her body.</li></ul>
<b>Overview of Hedda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Considered one of the "great" dramatic roles for women in theatre</li><li>• While Hedda's married name is Tesman, Ibsen wanted Hedda identified by her maiden name Gabler "to indicate that Hedda as a personality is to be regarded rather as her father's daughter than her husband's wife."</li><li>• It is inferred that Hedda is pregnant in the play.</li><li>• Hedda is intent on getting what she wants. She is also said to crave for power and has a "desire to shape a man's destiny."</li></ul>
<b>Look into</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is some interesting analysis of this character and Freud's work, as well as Ibsen's exploration of mental health.</li></ul>



## MISS JULIE

**Available media resources:** There is a film starring Jessica Chastain and Colin Farrell available on DVD (2014) and clips available online.

**Overview of the play**

- Written in 1888 by August Strindberg
- Naturalistic style
- Set on Midsummer's Eve
- At her father's manor, Miss Julie is drawn to a servant called Jean after a broken engagement of her own. He is engaged to another servant but on this night Miss Julie's and Jean's feelings quickly develop into love and they sleep together. After debates about what they could do, they develop a plan to run away and run a hotel. Their plan is discovered and when Miss Julie's father arrives home they lose their nerve. Jean eventually convinces her the only way out is to commit suicide.
- Miss Julie exits at the end of the play, with a razor given to her by Jean. It infers she is going to kill herself.

**Overview of Miss Julie**

- Miss Julie is motivated by factors including her impulsive nature and desires, her father and status/class and traumas from her family's history.
- Raised by her mother to think like and act like a man.

**Look into**

- Darwinism
- Naturalism

## A DOLL'S HOUSE

**Available media resources:** A movie version (1973) featuring Anthony Hopkins as well as other scenes and clips available online.

**Overview of the play**

- Written by Henrik Ibsen in 1879
- A three act play in prose
- Takes place over Christmas
- Nora and Torvald, her husband, have struggled with money in the past but now he has a new position at the bank where he works.
- Krogstad, an employee at the bank and an immoral man, blackmails Nora into trying to save his job by begging her husband not to fire Krogstad. It doesn't work and Torvald sends a letter of dismissal.
- Dr Rank arrives when Nora is alone. He is terminally ill and she plans to ask him for assistance with Torvald, but he tells her that he loves her and so she doesn't ask for anything. He leaves and Krogstad arrives.
- Krogstad says he has left a letter in the mail box which details Nora's forgery of her father's signature and that she must make Torvald hire him back in a higher position than before. When he leaves Nora tells Mrs Linde, Nora's old school friend, everything. Mrs Linde goes to Torvald and leaves a note as he will not be back until the following evening. Nora tries to distract Torvald from opening the mail by dancing the Tarantella which she is rehearsing for the costume party that night. She makes him promise not to open it until after her performance that night.
- During the party, when Krogstad arrives, it is revealed during a conversation with Mrs Linde that they had once been in love but she had married for money. Now that her husband is dead they are free to be together again. Krogstad is happy at the news and wants to retrieve the letter before it is opened. Mrs Linde stops him, believing that both Nora and Torvald will be better off once the truth is out.
- Nora and Torvald return from the costume party and Torvald makes advances towards Nora which Dr Banks interrupts. Once he leaves Torvald opens the mail box to find the letter from Krogstad and two of Dr Banks's cards with a black cross across his name. Nora explains that it symbolizes that Dr Banks is going to die. She insists that Torvald read the letter.
- Torvald is angered and calls Nora a hypocrite and liar. They then receive another letter from Krogstad which is the return of the contract with Nora's forged signature. Torvald is happy and tries to recant his previous statements.
- Nora has had enough and states that Torvald has always treated her like a doll to be played with and looked at. She declares she is leaving to find out who she really is. The play ends with her walking out.

**Overview of Nora**

- Full name is Nora Helmer
- Nora lacks a sense of self and this leads her to leave her family.
- She originally comes across as young and naïve but as the play progresses her true feelings and character become known, including the oppressive nature of her marriage.

**Look into**

- Feminist tones as it finishes with Nora leaving her family at the end of the play, breaking societal norms at the time.
- Also discussion around it being about each person finding themselves whether male or female.



## FREUD

**Available media resources:** The School of Life have a video on Sigmund Freud which may be of interest to you or your students, to get your head around the ideas if it is new content and relevant to your unit of study.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQaqXK7z9LM>

**Overview of Freud**

- Full name: Sigmund Schlomo Freud
- An Austrian neurologist and father of psychoanalyse
- Born 1856, died 1939
- Influenced by Freidrich Nietzsche and Charles Darwin, among others

**Research topics**

- Oedipus complex
- Dream analysis
- Psychotherapy
- Femininity and female sexuality
- Free association
- Transference

**Play relevance**

- There is a connection made by Joseph Wood Krutch between Hedda and Freud's work. He says that Hedda is one of the "most fully developed neurotic female protagonists of literature".



# BEFORE YOU SEE THE SHOW

## 1. WARM UP GAME

### Bus Stop with a twist.

Place three chairs on stage. Three students will take a chair each and assume a different, well known, character. For example, Harry Potter, Iron Man and Nemo. The students then interact as these characters as though they are at a bus stop (or some other destination of your choosing). After a couple of minutes of improvising the character at stage right finds a reason to leave, the other two characters shift over a seat and the stage left seat is taken by another character of the students choosing. This continues until all students have played a character and improvised.

Aim: To offer, accept and extend improvisations and to practice creating situations with a given character.

Debrief the activity by asking the students if it was easier to adopt a known character and why.

## 2. COFFEE SHOP CONVO

Similar to the warm-up game, create a “coffee shop” in the classroom and have students adopt a character. They can interact with everyone else in the shop and improvise situations – ordering food and drinks, sitting at tables, etc. Ask the students to complete the following three tasks during the improvisation:

- Talk to at least 5 different characters
- Find out what another character does for a living
- Find out what another character wants to achieve in their life

You can set other questions that suit the purpose of your unit of study and encourage the students to develop characters with a background.

## 3. ROLE ON THE WALL

To explore the characters of the play have students break into “Expert” groups to research the plays and characters explored in *When One Door Closes*. Also have a group research Freud’s work as this was a part of the devising process and informed this new piece of theatre. Students then report back to the class. As they present their ideas, create a Role on the Wall for each of the characters. This can be added to after you see the show.

## 4. FRAMING THE ACTION (PHYSICAL)

Pick one of the following stimuli and create a movement piece which incorporates use of space, an object and one line of text.

- Your morning routine
- Your greatest fear
- Telling a friend a secret

Remember – this is a movement piece so you can use ritualistic and symbolic movement and experiment with tempo, levels and spatial relationships to communicate dramatic meaning.

## 5. DEVISING

Students choose an issue or topic they are passionate about and write a 150-200 word monologue which expresses their viewpoint. Students then pass their monologue to someone else in the class. Students then devise a movement based performance piece that incorporates the monologue. Their work could include soundscape, the viewpoints, acrobatics or other style or form that you are working towards in your unit.

Students could do this within one lesson or over the course of a week, depending on how deep you want them to go with the monologues. If you have more time the students could also use technologies and present with lighting, projections, sound and more. This is a quick way to get your students into devising and demonstrating work based on ideas and stimulus.

## 6. SCENE TITLES (FORMING)

The CIRCA ensemble used scene titles to describe each section or scene in the show. Here are some of them:

1. The Cake we Bake
2. Domesticity
3. Can-Can of the men
4. Wild Dancers by Mad Moonlight
5. For the blood on their hands is their own
6. Tea time for the soul

Use these scene titles to create your own improvisations or scenes. They could be used after you see the performance to discuss the scenes themselves and how they were realised by the ensemble.

# AFTER YOU SEE THE SHOW

## 1. GROUP DEVISED WORK

This is an activity inspired by a task used in the creative development process of *When One Door Closes*. In groups of 3 or 6, play the students a video of The Tarantella, an Italian traditional folk dance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDtOmWbFHMO>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trCrFGUdHNw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7K7zrefNxLo>

The students watch the dance, choose characters from the play you have just seen performed live and create their own dance competition. The student that plays Nora will compete either separately or with their partner (depending on if your groups are 3 or 6 people) against Hedda and Miss Julie. It should be clear to the audience who each of the characters are based on in their performance. Students can have time to rehearse their dance piece, which can include physical theatre and circus. Play The Tarantella and students can use the classroom as the dance hall for the competition. They can come up with character introductions. You could have all the Miss Julie's compete at the same time, then all of the Nora's and then all of the Hedda's. Or, you could have them go all at once depending on your space and students.

## 2. INDIVIDUALLY DEVISED WORK

Much like the pre-show activity where a student writes a monologue they are interested in, students choose a character from *When One Door Closes* and they write an inner monologue. They need to choose a specific moment in the play when this inner monologue would occur. Depending on your unit of study students can either do this as an activity to better explore the character, they can perform it or they could devise a movement piece which performs the monologue through the style of physical theatre or circus.

## 3. DISCUSSION ABOUT DEVISING AND ENSEMBLE WORK

No matter what your unit of work is, consider how you find what works in the devising process. What doesn't work and why? How do you fix it? Remind your students to try. Try again and again. To think big, think new and think again.

Explore the process of devising performative work as an ensemble. You could consider the following in relation to *When One Door Closes*:

- The three female protagonists are the basis of the devising process for this play and give the audience an entry point into the play and provide some prior knowledge. However, it is all experimentation from that point on.
- Who are these women after this play? How have they changed? What has changed them?
- There can be so much freedom when there are boundaries. For example, by giving the ensemble these three stories and characters, they have a starting point but can push boundaries and explore within the given framework.





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**In Person** 9am - 5pm, Monday - Friday  
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